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Blackstone

Boston's First Inhabitant

SECOND EDITION.

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WILLIAM BLACKSTONE

Boston's First Inhabitant

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TO

The Old South Meeting House:

ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING MONUMENTS OF OUR PROVINCIAL PERIOD, OF EVENTS AND MEN THAT HELPED TO ESTABLISH OUR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND FREE INSTITUTIONS, THIS TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF

WILLIAM BLACKSTONE,

THE EARLIEST INHABITANT OF BOSTON, WHO ALSO LOVED LIBERTY, CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS, IS

Respectfully Dedicated.

"ESTO PERPETUA."

What is Known of Blackstone.

For several years previous to the first settlement of Boston, in September, 1630, William Blackstone, its earliest European inhabitant, occupied by himself what formed for long afterwards the principal part of it, the peninsula known as Shawmut. This originally comprised an area of about eight hundred acres, since more than doubled by accessions from the sea, the whole with much besides annexed to our city from the country round about, now crowded with population. Blackstone, a man of learning, an ordained minister of the Church of England, and, consequently, a graduate of one of its universities, unwilling to conform to ecclesiastical requirements which his conscience disapproved, had come to America "to get from under the power of the lords bishops." Here he dwelt, solitary and alone, raising his apples and roses, and reading his books, of which he had a plentiful supply.

His solitude was unpleasantly disturbed in the summer of 1630 by the arrival at Charlestown, across the river, of Winthrop and his company, under their patent of March 4, 1629. Their lives in peril from disease engendered by exposure and privation, and aggravated by the impurity of the water, he generously invited them over to share with him the more salubrious spot he inhabited, and which abounded in springs.

Cheerfully yielding up to them the greater part of his possessions, he was contented himself to retain fifty acres adjacent to the spot whereon stood his house. Our story intimates how it chanced that, a few years afterwards, "finding he had fallen under the power of the lords brethren," he surrendered this lot and all his other rights within the then narrow neck of land connecting the peninsula with Roxbury,

excepting six acres. He received six shillings from each householder, and, in some instances, larger sums in voluntary contributions, for this release. It has been said that he disclaimed any other title but that of first discoverer and occupant, but this release shows that the colonists considered his title to some extent, at least, valid or equitable. In 1623, the Council of New England had patented to Robert Gorges ten miles along the north-east shore of Massachusetts Bay, by thirty inland, with all islands, not previously granted, within three miles of the main land. Walford, at Charlestown; Maverick, on what is now East Boston; Thompson, who died in 1628, on the island that still bears his name; Blackstone, at Shawmut, are supposed to have held under this patent, and been pioneers of a projected plantation.

Sir Ferdinando Gorges had received large grants from the Council farther north. Interested in the speedy colonization of the country, he caused his son Robert to surrender his patent, and another issued, vesting in Winthrop and his associates what it covered, with the rest of Massachusetts, outside the limits of Plymouth, to the western sea. John Blackstone, a member of Parliament, appears to have taken an active interest in the affairs of the infant plantations. As one of a parliamentary committee, in 1642, he invited Cotton, Hooker, and Davenport to come over for consultation upon the general condition of the realm. As one of the Council, he joined in a power to William Blackstone to deliver seisin under one of its patents. No consanguinity is known between John and William; but their bearing the same name justifies the conjecture that such existed; that our first settler did actually possess claims entitled to compensation for their relinquishment; and that John's position in the Council may have led William to take up his residence in New England, when constrained by conscience to abandon the Church.

Whereabouts, precisely, on the peninsula was his dwelling-place has long puzzled our historians. Some of the earlier authorities speak of his residing on Blackstone's Point, on

Cambridge Bay, opposite the mouth of Charles River. It seems not to have occurred to Shaw, Snow, Drake, and Shurtleff that his name might attach at that period to all Shawmut; and, regarding Barton's Point as what was intended, they located his house variously on Poplar or Cambridge streets or a mile away in the vicinity of Charlestown Bridge. The publication of Odlin's deposition, dated June 10, 1684, recorded with Suffolk Deeds, 26-84, as to Blackstone's release, discouraged the hope that further information might be gleaned by examination of these ancient volumes. The correspondence in area of the lot reserved by Blackstone, or assigned to him in 1631, and that appropriated soon after his surrender as a common and training-field, and of his six acres to part of that conveyed by Copley to Harrison G. Otis and Jonathan Mason, in 1796, long since led the present writer to the conclusion that our beautiful Common was no other than his park and pasture; that his orchard lay close by, and was substantially the same laid down as Bannister's gardens, on Burgiss' map of 1728, and that his house stood on the ground bounded by Beacon, Walnut, and Spruce streets, near to which latter street the sea then ebbed and flowed.

Under the impression that his connection with our early history was too interesting an episode not to be kept in mind, the subject shaped itself into the present form; and whilst thus engaged, another effort was made to procure, if possible, such additional light as the Suffolk Registry afforded. No conveyance is there believed to be recorded of the six-acre lot from Blackstone, none to Copley, and the earliest is that of the Bracketts to Williams and Vial in 1676, from whom, in 1709, it passed to Thomas Bannister. From his heirs, by foreclosure of mortgages or other process of law, and deed not recorded, it eventually came to Copley before 1770. The deposition taken in 1711 of Mrs. Ann Pollard, the first of Winthrop's company, as mentioned in the text, to leap ashore upon the peninsula, and who lived till 1725, when she had reached the age of 105, states that Blackstone sold

his homestead to Richard Pepys, who built a house on the land, of which her husband was the tenant, and possibly Pepys may have occupied another himself on the property. When Copley conveyed, in 1796, two then ancient houses stood upon his estate, in one of which he painted many of his admirable portraits, and there his distinguished son, Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst, was born.

The area then actually passing came nearer to twenty acres in all, the ordinance of 1647 giving proprietors of the upland one hundred rods below high-water mark.

Pepys may have gone home at the restoration of the monarchy, or earlier. We do not know that he was not the same Richard Pepys, cousin of Samuel, the entertaining diarist, and the Irish judge of 1664, from whom Lord Cottenham, chancellor in 1836–41, and a successor of Lyndhurst, descended. It would be agreeable to trace, in addition to these associations of great legal luminaries with the spot, yet another of the kind, and discover that our Blackstone was of the same family as his namesake, Sir William, the distinguished commentator on the Laws of England, whose volumes never grow old and are ever pleasant to read, and who was born in London, son of Charles, in 1723, and died in 1780. The son of our William had sons, one of whom, a lieutenant, fell at the siege of Louisburg, in 1746. The only promising clue to the parentage and birthplace of our first inhabitant is a power, in 1653, of Sarah Blackstone (Suffolk Deeds) to collect money advanced, in which she is described as of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and which mentions the name of Stevenson, that of the first husband of Blackstone's wife.

In 1638 the authorities granted Blackstone fifteen acres at Muddy Brook, now Brookline, then a part of the town of Boston. He may have continued a freeman and possibly not have sold his estate, but it is generally presumed that he left with his cattle and books for Rehoboth in the spring of 1635. In a house he called Study Hall, a few rods from the river now bearing his name, on the declivity of what he called

Study Hill, about sixty feet in elevation, he resided the rest of his days. Miantonimo, nephew of Canonicus, king of the Narragansetts, Ocamsequin or Massasoit, king of Wampanoags, were his friends, as also their sons Canonchet and king Philip, and his influence may have averted, during his life, the calamity of Indian hostilities which broke out soon after his death. That event took place May 26, 1675, when he had reached the age of fourscore.

He occasionally visited Boston and Providence, and preached in the latter place, and at Boston, in 1659, before Gov. Endicott, married Mrs. Sarah Stevenson, widow of John, who died in June, 1673. His only child, John, sold the two hundred acres at Rehoboth, in 1693, to the Whipples, who very recently owned them. The house, barns, and books — nearly two hundred in number, quartos and folios, and some Latin — were burnt by the Indians in 1676, one of their few victories having been gained not far from Study Hill. In the conflagration of his house perished his manuscript volumes and other papers, very possibly of great interest. His grave, near the site of his dwelling, may be still marked by stones at the head and foot; but he should have appropriate monuments raised to his memory both there and here.

If to be deplored that our first inhabitant did not leave his own monuments in word and deed, if his life coursed on and left no waif behind it, there is much in his character and career for respectful admiration. Conscientious, noble, and generous, his intellectual pursuits, love of nature, cultivation of the earth, and subjection of the lords of the pasture to his bidding, his courage and faith strike sympathetic chords. Nor should his preference of seclusion to the busy world be condemned without remembering what that world was which he abandoned. A self-complacent, perfidious tyrant on the throne, besotted with indulgence, merciless from impunity, robbing his subjects to enrich favorites that imprisoned or beheaded, or worse, at their will or his own; a people that tamely submitted; a Church of rite and dogma without Christi-

anity, — from this seething caldron of corruption emerged later the furies of retribution; and minister, primate, and another king, his son, quite as arbitrary, went to the block. No marvel that the howl of the wild beast of the forest and the yell of the savage lost their terrors; or that the good seed separated from the chaff and came here to plant. The recluse, grown sensitive to rude contact with his kind, strove in vain to conquer his repugnance and become as other men. He neglected no opportunity to do them service, but valued too highly his own independence to submit to their dictation. Circumstance and Providence had circumscribed his paths, and he had not the motive and, perhaps, not the strength to open others for himself.

WILLIAM BLACKSTONE.

HIGH on an eminence he stood,
His thoughts beyond the sea,
For he had left his native land
That he might here be free, —
Free from the thrall of unjust laws,
Far from a despot king,
Prelates whose haughty will would all
To like subjection bring.
Too true and honest to accept
What conscience disapproved,
Its dictates he obeyed, and left
All that at home he loved.
If his from all the world to choose,
Surely no lovelier spot
Than where our three-hilled city stands
To dwell, all else forgot.
The sylvan scene around, beneath,
He claimed it as his own,
Nor cared, while Providence protects,
That he was there alone.

Not quite alone; the curling smoke —
Near hills like smoke in hue —
Marked where a noble sachem dwelt,
He found both kind and true.

Save him, and one across the bay,
  One, whose island home lay near,
He lived a solitary man,
  No kindred soul to cheer.
Nor had he need; his well-stored mind,
  Books rich with precious lore,
His sea-girt home of hill and dale,
  He asked from Heaven no more.
Whatever worth his while to know,
  Or Old World could impart,
In college cloisters he had learned, —
  A priest of guileless heart.

In times when every rank, degree,
  Appropriate garments wore,
His priestly garb made plain to sight
  The sacred name he bore.
From Merrymount or Plymouth Rock
  Did saint or sinner stray,
He gave them of his frugal meal,
  And sped them on their way.
The mocker stayed his ribald jest;
  The Indian bowed his head;
All recognized the man of God,
  Who shared with him his bread.

Years came and went, his chief delight
  To watch the seasons change,
To fish or fowl along the shore,
  The neighboring hillsides range;
Cull cress and herb, and mark the Spring

Her measured mazes tread,
Mayflower, violet, eglantine,
Each morn new odor shed;
Roses from home, that cherished ties
Kept in perennial bloom,
Carols awakening memories
Which living forms assume.

He roamed the woods, and tracked the deer
Through winter's drift of snow,
Or on its crust, on snow-shoes glides
With every pulse aglow;
Now mid the summer moonbeams floats
Upon the waters wide
That washed up to his cottage door,
With each returning tide.

His trees in spring perfume the breeze,
In autumn yield their fruit;
If no Eve there with him to share
No serpent bruised his foot,
His Eden ground requites his toil,
Each moderate want supplies;
With grateful heart received what sent,
Nor craved what God denies.

When frosty days the night closed in
He sought his sheltered nook,
Beside the blazing logs to muse,
Or con his favorite book.
Little he dreamed that Copley's brush,

Where stood his humble cot,
Should one day magic works create,
Not to be soon forgot.
Yet still perchance, as lulled the storm,
The stirring tones he hears
Of Lyndhurst, matchless in debate,
Thrice chief among his peers;
Nor only famous for his birth,
His eye prophetic scanned
A throng of men since known to fame,
Whose homes stood close at hand:
Otis, of honeyed eloquence;
Channing, from heaven astray;
Prescott, of lucid narrative;
Motley and Phillips play;
And merchant princes, bold and wise,
Warm heart and liberal hand,
Who gathered harvests from the seas
To enrich their native land.
Might one but tell their honored names,
Refinement, culture, worth,
What brighter spot than his own home
To illuminate the earth?

And, as the flickering embers cast
Strange shadows on his walls,
The dreamer saw those walls expand
Into palatial halls,
Where golden youth, whose thrifty sires
Worked that their sons might play,
With merry laugh and pleasant chat

Beguile the hours away.
He saw before their windows spread
A paradise of shade,
Where lake and turf cooed lovingly
And gleaming fountains played.
And all around, in myriad forms,
A glorious city grown,
Of thrice a hundred thousand souls,
Whose fame through earth is known;
With freedom, faith, and culture blest
To bloom till time grows old, —
The fairest rose that decks our orb
Were half its marvels told.
Perhaps the lifted clouds disclosed
Much that to us is dim, —
A future much more wondrous still
Than what is now to him.

Yet not alone glad themes like these
Possessed his busy thought,
Which, wandering back in fancy, traced
What all such marvels wrought.
A nation angry with its king
Who would a tyrant be;
That gory head, the bloody axe;
Sure now they must be free.
Ah, no! not yet the lesson taught,
Not yet is earned the prize,
They first must learn to rule themselves,
Be honest, just, and wise.
Not Cromwell, with his gloomy rule,

Nor Stuarts, gay or trist,
Orange nor Brunswick, cared to know
For subjects thrones exist.
Not all of Marlborough's victories,
Laurels by land or sea,
Could make a people truly great,
Unless both good and free.
Not all her glowing page reveals,
Her statesmanship has won,
Science or art can glorious make
With half her work undone.
Though every realm between the poles
To her in homage vies,
In virtue, happiness broadcast,
Alone true grandeur lies.

Time crumbles down the keep and fane
Its onward progress stop;
The generations, grown more wise,
Each reign some shackle drop,
Till knowledge, its inheritance,
And law divine, supreme,
Our father-land the Eden be,
Pictured in Blackstone's dream.

All that can chance flits by in dreams,
As Ariel round the earth;
But limbs grown chill admonishing,
Fresh fagots heap the hearth.
And as the genial flame again
The cheerful room illumes,

A sense of comfort came once more,
  And he his theme resumes.

Now, in the "Mayflower" cabin grouped,
  The Pilgrims sign the deed,
Which, basing rule on equal rights,
  Of freedom sowed the seed.
Through tribulations dire, that seed,
  Like winter grain, they sow,
As nations ripen to receive,
  The earth to overgrow.

He sees how other men, like him,
  Grown weary of their kind,
Home, friends, and country all forsake,
  In other lands to find.
Many for whom no cover laid,
  At Nature's table there,
With wife and child, and all they have,
  Hard hand and heart to dare.

He sees the swiftly speeding bark,
  Fleets wing their westward flight,
Till where the beast or savage roamed
  They gather in their might.
Indians in vain provoke their wrath,
  Frenchmen in vain contend,
Their armies Louisburg reduce
  Or Abraham's Heights ascend.

France yields the realm she cannot hold;
  And prostrate every foe,

They claim their honest rights as men,
  For freedom strike the blow.
What need repeat that honored roll,
  Who fought on field or flood,
Who, sage in council as in war,
  Sealed their brave faith in blood?

'Tis not alone the deathless names
  That glory's meed deserve;
Theirs, though obscure, who nobly fell,
  Angels above preserve.
No prouder heirloom for their race
  Than in such struggle die,
Which gave a mighty nation birth,
  First-born of Liberty.

And as imagination paints
  Its spread from sea to sea, —
Cities and states of wondrous growth;
  Four million slaves set free, —
That little cot seemed all too small
  To cage so bold a wing;
He issued forth into the night,
  To hark the seraphs sing,
Where stars on stars, in lustrous blaze,
  Decked the high arch above,
And, gazing on their circling orbs,
  How could he doubt God's love,
Or to his power a limit fix,
  Or to his will to bless?

He knew that he was infinite,
  And his law happiness.
Calm and subdued, at peace with Heaven,
  Sweet sleep his being fills;
And sunshine, when he oped his door,
  Purpled the snow-clad hills.

Thus glided by the peaceful life,
  He hoped might never change,
When rumors came across the sea,
  Tidings of purport strange.
Ten years had passed since "Mayflower" brought
  The Pilgrims to the shore;
And now, with many a sister bark,
  They bring a thousand more;
Of generous nurture, brave, devout,
  Women of high degree,
From homes of ease and affluence,
  A goodly company.
Beyond the stream, where Warren fell,
  Rose spacious home for all;
And long, before the corn grew ripe,
  They gathered in its hall.

Unused to hardship, sorrowing
  For friends the seas divide,
They droop and sicken, one by one;
  Even their physician died.
Grim Death appalled some frighted souls,
  To some a welcome guest,
The wise to Providence resigned,

However sore distressed.
Their barks but scanty food supplied;
Untilled as yet the fields;
And soon to fevered lips the spring
No more refreshment yields.
It was a sorry sight to see,
To make one's heart to bleed;
How could a Christian man unmoved
Regard such urgent need?
His springs and brooks in copious streams
With crystal waters welled;
He gave them all they wished and more, —
Naught but his farm withheld.

Yet all he had suffered from his kind,
He could not quite forget;
Too dearly loved his solitude
To lose without regret.
We found him, when our tale began,
Where now our golden dome
Sheds lustre on our little world,
On many a happy home.
The hill, then loftier far than now,
Looked out upon the sea,
Which in the setting sunbeams glowed
In molten brilliancy.
And as he gazed, sad memories stole
Of all his days before;
Of many a grief to wring his heart,
And disappointment sore.
When left to nature and himself,

Life had been pleased content;
But every fibre of his soul
The world had wrenched and rent.
He placed implicit trust in Heaven,
And, striving to do right,
Solace, all unexpected, came,
As follows day the night.
If dread presentiments of ill
Perplex his troubled soul,
He fearlessly submits his will
To that supreme control,
Which, thus far on his pilgrimage
His never-failing guide,
Will not forget him or forsake,
Whatever chance betide.
His heart still yearned to be at home;
Familiar faces see;
And all he left for conscience' sake
In lands beyond the sea.

That sea, as set the parting sun,
The gathering darkness shrouds,
Whilst western skies its lingering beam
Heaps high with gorgeous clouds.
Rose, blue, or emerald, every tint
Of gold or flower or gem
Mingled or gleamed with opal change
Alp, throne, or diadem.
It was a glorious spectacle,
And, as entranced the view,
The omen he accepts as sent

His courage to renew.
With swelling heart and radiant face
He marked their splendors die;
His homeward path the evening star
Beaconing from twilight sky.

When once resolved, he, wavering not,
His invitation gave,
Which to that haggard crowd appeared
Like rescue from the grave.
They waste no time, but speedily
Their preparations make,
And, 'ere the harvest moon has waned,
Their way across they take.
The first that leaped ashore lived on
Near a hundred years to tell, —
Her wrinkled front on canvas shows
What that long life befel.

Not all could come, — some quite too ill
To move from where they were;
Bold men explored the higher streams,
Or settled Dorchester;
And Salstonstall to Watertown,
Dudley to Cambridge guide, —
The sires to countless multitudes
An honest source of pride.

But Winthrop came, and hosts whose names
Descendants bear to-day;
Johnson, whose loved remains they bring,

And funeral honors pay;
Wilson, their pastor, best of guides
Through thorny paths to steer,
Who cast the hated vestments off
To keep his conscience clear;
Grave men, in sober garb arrayed,
Matrons, both wise and good,
Young men, of manly form and port,
And fairest maidenhood.

Near where they land, and friends they left,
Some habitations reared,
But what of splendor graced the place
Has long since disappeared.
The marts of trade and squalid want
Now occupy the ground,
Where Mathers, Hutchinsons, Revere,
Once shed their lustre round.
And fashion, wandering farther west,
Affects that region gay,
Where Boston's sole inhabitant
Passed many a happy day.

Their choicest lot they gave to him,
In hearts and councils first;
Its wholesome waters flow to-day
As when they quenched his thirst.
At equal distance from its gates,
The beacon and the fort,
The country roused against the foe,
Protects their infant port.

The briny currents ebbed and flowed,
  Freshening the air around;
Mingling their fragrance with the flowers
  That decked his garden ground.
His modest home of English oak,
  Like tents the Arabs fold,
Thrice moved, before it anchored fast,
  Till England lost her hold
On this broad land she threw away,
  Deaf to his words of light,
"True liberty is but to that
  Is honest, just, and right."
Her vandal soldiers burnt for warmth
  Each massive beam and floor,
Where he had cordial welcome given
  Alike to rich and poor.
His brother rulers graced his board,
  And many an Indian chief;
That there he Blackstone entertained,
  Is not beyond belief.

Our theme is Blackstone's history,
  Not that of Winthrop's home;
But, standing on this sacred spot,
  The words unbidden come.
He died; and after Cotton passed,
  That gifted man in prayer,
Norton, fed his flock, and here abode
  Till Heaven called him there.
In dying he a portion gave
  His widow, all the rest

To raise another house to God,
  And succor the distressed.
Here Stoughton told of winnowed seed,
  Sewall confessed his fault,
And pious pastors by the score
  The Infinite exalt.
Prince wrote his annals, books collects
  Rare and of price untold;
Some went to kindle Winthrop's house,
  Well worth their weight in gold.

Here the bold eloquence, that fired
  The heart to daring deed,
Denounced the tyrant in his might,
  Our blessed country freed.
When dusky form and warwhoop dread,
  And steady tramp drew near,
To throw the tea into the sea,
  Its crowded thousands cheer.
See Warren, soldiers rude shut out,
  Through open window glide,
Kerchief on pointed muzzle drop,
  His foes abashed, defied.

If Faneuil's hall its cradle be,
  This church is Freedom's school;
Both teach its priceless boon to gain,
  How best preserved its rule.
Their hallowed walls, in spirit tones,
  Repeat each honored name;
Those glorious voices keep alive

The telephone of fame.
Yet in no feeble whispers breathe,
With no uncertain sound,
Their bugle notes stir valiant hearts,
Where any despot found.
Let not these glorious monuments,
Of word and action brave,
Be swept from earth while freedom lasts,
Whilst freemen live to save.
The Ipswich room, where Norton prayed,
Wrote words to search or burn,
Its shelves and tables all remain,
Awaiting his return.
If anarch ever rule the land,
Or tyrant forge the chain,
These very walls will be a power
To drive them forth again.

We cannot shape our destiny,
Or one who dearly prized
Religious freedom, human right,
Would all have sacrificed,
With Eliot, Hampden, to oppose
Encroachments of the crown,
Bearing his part as valiantly,
Winning the like renown.
But no such glorious task like this
Vouchsafed to Blackstone's life;
And long estrangement from his kind
Made him averse to strife.
The earnest faith the Puritans

In daily walks displayed
Awoke an echo in his breast,
On simple tenets stayed.
Though all the land was his by law
They could not well gainsay,
He as a freeman took his part,
Prayed in their church of clay.
Besides his fifty-acre farm,
And six he dwelt upon,
He made them welcome to the rest,
And by himself lived on.
Later that farm, from then till now
To public use applied,
He gave up, all contributing,
To be our special pride.

When antinomians disturbed
The peace that reigned before,
And women gathered near at hand,
On husbands closed the door,
Dared boldly to assert their right
To think as they saw fit,
Deemed grace far better than good works,
Free will than holy writ,
Winthrop would fain the turmoil still,
As other men of sense;
Sir Harry Vane but fanned the flame,
To make it more intense.
The women conquered. At the helm
Vane steered the ship of state,
And would have wrecked it on the shoals,

If such had been its fate.
Blackstone loved liberty of thought;
His views were too defined
For any subtle points like these
To fret his equal mind.
Perchance, as he no Rachel had,
It served but to amuse,
And heard with patience either side
The other side abuse.

Not so when Williams, Gorton came,
With views more like his own,
And Puritans from recent strife
Intolerant had grown,
And would have forced him to conform
To rules not to his mind;
He grieved to think that freedom gone
He had lost so much to find.
He told them plainly he had come
Of lord bishops to be rid,
And not disposed to be controlled
By lords brethren in stead.

Once more he had tried to love his kind,
Place faith in Christian men;
He found them harsh, unjust, and sought
His solitude again.
With herd and book he wends his way
Through forests dense and drear,
And by the stream that bears his name
Abode, no neighbors near.

When later Roger Williams came,
  Another State to plant,
Religious liberty proclaim,
  More friends he did not want.
Massasoit, Miantonimo,
  Knew well his modest worth,
Allowed no Indian of their tribes
  Intrude upon his hearth.
Taste, if not splendor, graced his home.
  In rural labor skilled,
His herds and flocks fast multiplied,
  His barns rich harvests filled.
The trees he planted long survived,
  Famed for the fruit they bore,
And trace remains of Blackstone, dead
  Two centuries and more.

He loved his books, but nature too;
  Explored the country wild,
Mounted upon his cream-white steer,
  Submissive as a child.
As age advanced, he prized less dear
  An independent life,
And, yearning for companionship,
  It blessed him in a wife;
For, often thus revisiting
  The spot so long his home,
His steed brought back a blooming bride,
  More pleased than Jove's to come.
A dozen years of happy days
  Of mutual love had flown,

Death took her gently from his side,
  Nor wholly left alone.
One only child engrossed his thoughts,
  Yet requited ill his care,
For, when at fourscore Blackstone died,
  He proved a spenthrift heir.

Thus it is said; but portents dark
  Shrouded the land in gloom
As Philip struck one vigorous blow
  To stay his coming doom.
He knew full well that lust for power,
  Greed for the wilds he roved,
Must soon exterminate his race,
  Unless that chance improved.
In forest glades his dusky braves,
  Their fiery war-paint dight
Swoop down with yell and purpose fell
  Upon the towns at night;
Torch, scalping-knife, and tomahawk
  Their ruthless vengeance wreak;
They bravely battled with the strong,
  But did not spare the weak.
For near two years, with varied chance,
  The bloody strife went on;
Their foes bought traitors in their camp,
  And thus the victory won.
The chiefs, who wisely laid their plans,
  Fought hard on many a field,
Rallied in vain their shattered bands,
  Too proud themselves to yield.

The Narragansett king of realms
  None fairer to behold,
Refused to barter land for life,
  His faithful braves for gold.
His sole request, — no white man's steel
  Should pierce his fearless breast, —
Pequods his generous spirit sent
  Where Indian hunters rest.
Philip well knew the cause was lost,
  And, saddened, not dismayed,
Calmly prepared himself for death,
  Not long to be delayed.
Erect upon his lofty throne,
  Twixt azure sea and sky,
He took one last, fond, lingering look,
  Then bowed his head to die.

Blackstone lay quiet in his grave,
  But the tornado swept
House, barns, and written page away
  The world were richer kept.
The son less frugal than the sire,
  His farm, now precious grown,
Passed to a race that valued it
  Because once Blackstone's own.
His grandson fell at Louisburg,
  And descendants yet may be
From Shawmut's sole inhabitant,
  To love his memory.

NOTES.

[*Page* 7.]

The following deposition of Mrs. Ann Pollard is that alluded to as identifying Blackstone's house as situated on Beacon, between Walnut and Charles streets, on the grounds upon Burgiss's map of 1728, set down as Bannister's gardens:—

"The deposition of Anne Pollard, of Boston, widow, aged about eighty-nine years. This deponent testifyeth and saith: that this deponent's husband, Mr. William Pollard, occupied and improved a certain piece or parcel of land situated near the bottom of the Common, at the westerly part thereof, in Boston aforesaid, and bounded on the sea south-west for many years; and that her said husband had hired the same of Richard Peepys, late of Boston aforesaid, gentleman, deceased, who often told this deponent that he, the said Peepys, bought the said land of Mr. Blackstone, clerk, formerly of Boston aforesaid; and further, that deponent saith that the said Peepys built a house thereon, wherein this deponent and her said husband dwelt for near fourteen years, during which time the said Blackstone used frequently to resort thereto; and this deponent never heard any controversy between him and the said Peepys about the said land, but that the same was always reputed to belong to him, as this deponent understood; and she further says, that soon after the sale thereof, as she supposeth, the said Blackstone removed from this town of Boston; and further saith not.

"ANNE POLLARD.

"BOSTON, December 26, 1711."

[*Page* 7.]

Charles river, so named for the unfortunate monarch who expiated his father's faults and his own on the scaffold, was called by the Indians Quinobequin.

[*Page* 11.]

Chickatabut, whose conveyance of the peninsula and lands to the colonists in 1630 was confirmed by his grandson, Wampatuck, in 1684-5.

[*Page* 12.]

Thomas Walford, at Mishawum, now Charlestown; David Thompson died 1628, at the island now bearing his name and occupied by the Farm School; Samuel Maverick lived at what is now known as East Boston.

[*Page* 13.]

Merry Mount, near Mount Wollaston, where Thomas Morton held his revels.

[*Page* 13.]

According to tradition, roses, of English varieties, adorned the garden of Blackstone. In "Merrymount," Motley describes him as riding on a bull. This is possible, since cattle were sent to the colonies at Strawberry Bank, on the coast of Maine, to Cape Ann and Plymouth, between 1620 and 1630; and Maverick, no doubt, had many on his island. That Blackstone broke in a bull to bit and bridle, and scampered upon its back over his domain, then consisting of seven hundred and fifty acres, is not impossible, or, perhaps, improbable; but, as his riding later about his new home at Rehoboth, and in visiting Providence and Boston on such an animal of the color mentioned, is well authenticated, the earlier bull may be a myth. The text, endeavoring to be historically accurate, reluctantly refrains from an incident, which, if it rested upon more reliable tradition, would add another interesting association with the earliest settlement of our city.

[*Page* 14.]

The house at the corner of Walnut and Beacon streets was built by John Phillips, first mayor of Boston, and father of the distinguished orator. The father of John Lothrop Motley, when the historian was a boy, lived on Walnut street, opposite the head of Chestnut; Dr. Channing on Mount Vernon, Otis and Prescott on Beacon.

[*Page* 14.]

Blackstone in his vision may be supposed to have recognized many other celebrities, local or world-renowned, connected with the future of his farm, whose names are household words. But too many are living to warrant an allusion to them. Francis Parkman and Charles Francis Adams are too widely known for reserve; McLean, whose name attaches to one of our charities he contributed largely to found, and David Sears, whose generous benefactions relieve hundreds of the worthy poor, with scores of more, familiar from their munificence, public service, and local influence, have dwelt or dwell now within its limits or near by.

[*Page* 19.]

Seventeen vessels came in May and June, chiefly to Salem, whence a large part of the colonists moved to Charlestown. A large house had been erected there for their accommodation on the Square. It was afterwards used for a tavern, and burnt on the day of the battle of Bunker Hill. Dr. Gager died on the 22d, and Isaac Johnson, whose wife was Arbella, daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, on the 30th of September. Johnson was buried in the Chapel burying-ground, part of his own lot.

[*Page* 22.]

North Square was till recent days the centre of many handsome residences —Hutchinson's and Sir Henry Frankland's being the most costly and memorable.

[*Page* 23.]

The lot assigned to Winthrop was nearly identical with that owned by the Old South Congregation before their recent removal to Dartmouth street. It extended from Spring lane to Milk street, from Washington to the lane once known as Jolliffe's, now Sewall place. The house erected by Winthrop stood on the north, or Spring lane side, of the property. It was used for a century as the parsonage, and burnt during the siege of Boston by British soldiers, in 1775, for fuel.

[*Page* 25.]

Sewall confessed his fault for hanging the witches, in meeting-time, before the assembled congregation.

[*Page* 29.]

Blackstone's orchard in Boston was well grown when he left Boston for Rehoboth, where, about his abode at Study Hill, he owned two hundred acres, and more in the neighborhood of Providence. His son John sold to Mr. Whipple, whose descendants still hold or did till recently.

[*Page* 29.]

The story of Jupiter, the white bull, and Europa is well known to classical scholars.

[*Page* 31.]

Canonchet, soon after the battle of the plains, near Blackstone's abode, in March, 1676, left his army of fifteen hundred men, with a slender following, to procure seed-corn at Seekonk. The 7th of April he was surprised at Study Hill and captured, and was carried to Stonington. He declined all overtures for surrendering his own and his people's territory in exchange for his life, only praying his captors that his death-blow might be speedily given by Uncas, a sagamore of the Pequods. It was not so ordered; but, in the presence of Major Denison, the Pequods shot him; Mohegans cut off his head, quartered and dismembered his body; Ninnicroft's men burnt the remains, except the head, which they presented to the council at Hartford. His principal residence, as that of his father, Miantonimo, is believed to have been Taminy Hill, in Newport, his dominions extending over the islands and westerly shore of Narragansett Bay.

[*Page* 31.]

King Philip, sachem of Pokanoket, youngest son of Ocamsequin, or Massasoit, succeeded his brother Alexander as king of the Wampanoags in 1657. His policy was to drive the English into the sea and recover the country for the Indian tribes. Sausaman, his secretary, and a convert of John Eliot's, betrayed his plans to his enemies. Two traditions exist as to his death: one, that he was slain by Church's men, Saturday morning, August 12, 1676, in a swamp, while attempting to escape; the other, upon Mount Hope, as related in the text. Mount Hope, in Bristol, overlooking Narragansett Bay and the sea, was one of his abodes; Long Pond, at Rainham, near the old home of the Leonards, another. Annawan, chief of the council of Philip, and his best general, was captured, August 28th, at Squannecook marsh, in Rehoboth, by Church, who endeavored to save his life. He did not succeed, and Annawan was beheaded at Plymouth, Tuopaquin, a noble Massachusetts warrior, captured later, being his companion in death.

As the forms were going to the press, "Merrymount," read many years ago, came to light from an out-of-the-way corner of the writer's shelves. His attempt to render more familiar to present generations what has been transmitted of the hermit of Shawmut would have been discouraged had Motley's vivid and complete account of him been remembered. Some supposed incidents will be found both in the novel and poem; but in the latter they were not borrowed from the former, but suggested by the subject common to both. The reader of the novel will take especial delight in this early scintillation of a genius which has since commanded the admiration of the world. The situation of Blackstone's abode in the book accords with that determined beyond all farther controversy by the deposition of Mrs. Pollard. For the moose-colored bull on which the novel mounts the sole inhabitant is claimed historical proof, and his solitude is cheered by a fawn, possibly no creature of the imagination, but an actuality, as the minotaur, supported by evidence.

In the haste of preparation for the Fair there was little opportunity for examination of the title on the records, and the Registry has not sufficient to reveal, to render it very clear. Since our first impression of these papers, the interesting articles of Gleaner, or Mr. Nathaniel Bowditch, the accomplished conveyancer, upon the titles of Beacon Hill, prepared in 1855 for the "Transcript," have been lent me by another of our ablest antiquarians. They do not shake the conviction that Blackstone selected his abode on the place indicated near the water, on the south-western declivity of the triple-crested hill, which gave Boston one of its names. The tide then flowed at least ten rods east of Charles street, at its junction with Beacon, and as his

reservations of fifty acres and of six later were near his residence, it is reasonable to presume that his house stood somewhere between Charles and Walnut, and of course possibly below Spruce. There is a difference of opinion as to his orchard, whether the same as Bannister's, or, what seems less probable, Humphrey Davy's, higher up the hill.

The land conveyed by Copley in 1796, 182, f. 182–184 and 191, f. 168, included two other parcels besides that which belonged to Blackstone. His lot of six acres extended, according to the authority cited, to a point not far, if any, above Spruce street, and extended about eight hundred feet, nearly to Pinckney street, embracing Louisburg square, and westerly down to the channel. According to the deposition of Mrs. Pollard, Blackstone sold to Richard Pepys, who, with Mary his wife, by deed not recorded, in which he describes himself as of Ashon in the county of Essex, conveyed to Nathaniel Williams in 1655. Mary, widow of Williams, with her second husband, Peter Brackett, bestowed the estate and another above it (the East lot) upon her son, by Williams, another Nathaniel, and his sister, Mrs. Vial, in 1676, 4, f. 264, from whom it passed in 1709, 24, f. 103, to Thomas Bannister. Samuel, son of Bannister, mortgaged it, and without any recorded conveyance the title of Copley was shown in court to be good.

Next above Blackstone, on what is now Beacon street, lay the possession of Francis East (2, f. 116) of about three acres, which Mary, widow and administratrix, sold Thomas Bannister, 1694, 17, f. 23, a lot about 240 × 5, lying above Spruce street; this passed with the other lot to Copley. Further up the hill a third parcel of what Copley purchased and conveyed and formed earlier part of the Elm pasture of Judge Sewall, who died seized in 1729. Richard Truesdale originally possessed it, and it passed 1667, 5, f. 234; through Deane, 1672, 8, f. 62; Whetcomb, 1678; Hawkins, 1690, 15, f. 46; Savage, 1692, 15, f. 183, to Sewall, vesting by virtue of intermediate deeds of Bagnall, 1744; Lucy, 1744; Erving, 1752; Cunninghams, 1751, 1783, and those of Sylvester Gardiner in 1770, and John Williams in 1773 to himself, in Copley. It included a gore of land east of Walnut conveyed to Dr Joy, 194, f. 116, whose estate then extended east to the street bearing his name, and from Beacon to Mt. Vernon, being also a part of the Elm pasture. The area of that pasture in 1732 was estimated at four acres and three quarters, measuring 440 feet in front by 490, its greatest depth.

The area bounded by Beacon, Mt. Vernon, Walnut to the east, and Spruce and Willow to the west is about 500 feet square or six acres. From Spruce to 160 feet above Charles on Beacon, about where was once high-water mark, is nearly 300 feet, from Beacon to Pinckney about 850, and 300 × 850 is about six acres. The land claimed by the Overseers of the Poor as part of the Pemberton trust under mortgages of the rear lots of the Phillips pasture, which pasture bounded north on Cambridge street ran along shore about 1,100 feet to Blackstone on the south; lay west of Louisburg square between that and the water. As measurements are rarely stated in these ancient deeds, and fences being perishable no reliable mon-

uments always existed, much had been left for conjecture. Neither quantities nor dimensions estimated on slopes hold out when reduced to a level.

It had been argued that Blackstone resided on Louisburg Square, for the reason that there still exists a copious spring. Shawmut signifies a place of springs, and water courses abounded all around its hills. Surely that which fed the old Frog Pond, and drained the south-western slopes of Beacon Hill, was as convenient as that farther north for Blackstone. What induced Winthrop to come over from Charlestown was that on Spring Lane near the Old South.

It does not seem reasonable that Blackstone should have selected so bleak a spot, or one so elevated, for his abode as Louisburg square. A place on the south-west declivity of the hill near the water seems more probable. As his fifteen acres at Muddy Brook in 1638 were allotted for three heads, he may then have had other persons in his household, and a new house not on the precise site of his earlier dwelling.

William Blackstone

William Blackstone

IN HIS RELATION TO

MASSACHUSETTS

AND

RHODE ISLAND.

Reprinted from THE CHURCHMAN of September 25th and October 2d, 1880.

A gentleman that is very singular in behavior, but his singularities proceed from his good sense.—
Spectator.

BY THE REV. B. F. DE COSTA.

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I.

WILLIAM BLACKSTONE:

The First Churchman of Boston, and the Founder of the City.

About the year 1624 the English explorer who chanced to land upon the peninsula where the city of Boston now stands must have encountered a phenomenon. Instead of being greeted by the painted savage, he was welcomed in familiar tones by a dignified and courteous individual in scholastic garb, whose language indicated liberal culture, as his sentiments testified to his generous humanity. Though nature reigned in primeval wildness, evidences of cultivation were not wanting, and upon the shelves of the little cottage to which the visitor was invited could be seen well-used tomes, recalling the studies of the university. Who, therefore, was this strange individual whose features united the lineaments of the contemplative recluse with those of good-fellowship and hospitality? This was none other than William Blaxton, or Blackstone, some time a student of

Emanuel, Cambridge, and now clerk in Holy Orders, sequestered in the wilderness of America.

How or when Blackstone reached New England is not known. It is certain, however, that he took his Master's degree in 1621, and that when he appeared in America he was still less than thirty years of age. Had he come over with Gorges in 1623, as Mr. Adams supposes, and identified himself with the hated colonists at Weymouth, he might not have trusted himself alone in immediate proximity to that place, as the savages would be thirsting for his blood. Besides, the Weymouth people had a clergyman with them, and would hardly desire another. The first mention of Blackstone is that of June 9th, 1628, when he was assessed twelve shillings towards the expence of arresting Morton of Merry Mount, though there is nothing to prove that he paid the tax or sympathized with the proceeding. Again, April 29th, 1629, he was empowered by Gorges to put Oldham in possession of lands near Boston, which has been accepted as proving that he was connected with the Weymouth colony; but it might be argued with equal force that he was connected with the colony at Dover, because a reference, hitherto unnoticed, mentions that, in 1631, he was empowered to perform a similar act for Hilton.

Whenever Blackstone may have come over, it is certain that his tastes were singular,

though he is by no means to be condemned for his singularity. A class of men may ever be ready to exclaim,

> "Oh, solitude, where are thy charms
> That sages have seen in thy face?"

and be unable to see with

> "———that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude."

Yet Blackstone, as well as John Baptist, found life in the wilderness somewhat to his account.

There is no evidence that Blackstone had any white neighbors prior to 1629, but in that year Thomas Walford, a Churchman like himself, was living in a palisadoed house at Mishawumet, now Charlestown. Somewhat later another well-known Churchman, Samuel Maverick, lived at Noddle's Island, now East Boston. It is thus a curious fact that the three peninsulas mentioned, and which closely faced one another, commanding the water approaches, were taken possession of by Churchmen, and this, too, at a time when the nearest English habitations were those at Plymouth. Gorges, the proprietor, was himself a Churchman. Can it be claimed that this was done without any particular design?

In 1630, however, Blackstone's quiet was invaded, for at that time Governor Winthrop and his people had reached Mishawumet. But when the recluse saw how the new-comers suf-

fered from the poor water, he invited them to Shawmut, or Shawamet, a name, like that of Charlestown, signifying a landing-place. The manuscript records of Charlestown recite that "Mr. Blackstone, dwelling on the other side Charles River, alone, to a place by the Indeans called Shawmutt, where he only had a cottage at, not far off the place called Blackstone Point, he came and acquainted the Governor of an excellent spring there, withal inviting and soliciting him thither. Whereupon . . . the greatest part of the Church removed thither, whither also the frame of the Governor's house was carried, when the people began to build their houses against the winter. And this place," the recorder adds, "was called Boston," which, it may be remembered, was from Boston, or "Botolph," England. The colonists, who hated saint worship, thus put themselves under the guardianship of St. Botolph, whose bones were carried in procession at Bury when the people wanted rain.

Blackstone's cottage was on the river side of Boston, near the present terminus of the bridge connecting the ancient tri-mountain peninsula with Cambridge, and looking prophetically toward the spot where no mean reproduction of his own *alma mater* was soon to rise. Upon what ground he took possession of the peninsula does not appear. A speech is sometimes put into his mouth, declaring in high terms that while the Cabots

acquired the whole continent by sailing along the coast, he had won his title by actual occupancy. Since, however, this coasting voyage of the Cabots is about as apocryphal as the "Humors of Eutopia," in which the speech first appeared, we may dismiss both. The versatile Dr. Peters tells us that William Peters "had a deed of the whole peninsula whereon Boston stands, which he purchased of Mr. Blaxton, who bought it of the Plymouth Company" (p. 51). Governor Winthrop immediately set about the work of organization, and, September 7th, 1630, the Court of Assistants formally ordered that "Tri-mountain be called Boston." October 19th, William Blackstone was admitted a Freeman (Gen. Reg., III. 41), but the next May it was voted that only those should be Freemen who joined "the Church." Even Hutchinson (I. 256) confesses that this was a "most extraordinary law," and one which, if enacted by Parliament, might well have been "the first in the roll of grievances." Thus the people who, from the cabin of the "Arbella," sent such loving greetings to their "dear brethren" of the Church of England, soon discovered that even "dear brethren" had no rights of citizenship that they were bound to respect. The details of what followed are wanting, but in the end Blackstone found it convenient to leave. Johnson, however, in "Wonder-working Providence," gives a curious paragraph that throws light upon

the subject. Speaking of the distress that prevailed in 1629, he says: "All this while little likelihood there was of building the temple for God's worship, there being only two that began to hew stones in the mountains, the one named Mr. Bright and the other Mr. Blaxton, and one of them began to build; but when they saw all sorts of stones would not fit in the building, as they supposed, the one betook him to the Seas againe and the other to till the land, retaining no symbol of his former profession but a Canonicall Coate" (c. 9). Bright, it appears, was a clergyman of the Church of England, who had come out with the people, but was disliked, as Hubbard shows. Morton, in his Memorial (p. 93, ed. 1826), says distinctly that Bright "was a conformist." Evidently he had credited the people of the "Arbella" with sincerity when they declared that they were misjudged by those who said that they meditated separation. Bright came, like the Browns, expecting to enjoy a free Church in a free State. The Browns at Salem reproached Skelton and Higginson for their course, and were put on board a ship and sent home to England. Bright, however, was more careful, and came to Charlestown with a part of the company, evidently hoping to hold them somewhat to the Church. Mather says that Blackstone and Bright "began to hew," while Bright himself "began to build." His efforts, nev-

ertheless, proved in vain. He could not keep them to their promises, while Blackstone would not join "the Church." Later the people were confirmed in their judgment against conformity by a fact recorded by the governor, whose son, a magistrate, had a Greek Testament, the Psalms, and Common Prayer bound together and deposited in a corn-loft. The "thing worthy of observation was" that he "found the Common Prayer eaten with mice, every *leaf of it*, and not any of the two others *touched*, nor any other of his books, though there were above a thousand." Thus the fate of episcopacy in Boston was settled by misunderstood mice; for evidently, after all, these were wise rodents, who, not knowing the Greek, let it alone, intending, no doubt, to teach the separatists the importance of abstaining from meddling with matters which they did not understand.

Hubbard, speaking of Bright, says: "He, not unlike Jonah, fled from the presence of the Lord." Some have supposed that Johnson meant to say that Bright became a sailor, but this does not quite follow from his language. Finding a ship going to England, he "paid the fare thereof," and went home. Fleeing from the atmosphere of Separatism was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, and, upon the whole, a pretty neat deification of schism. Nevertheless, Mr. Bright's case shows what Churchmen should not forget—that the

settlement over which he was to have been placed as minister was originally intended for something better than separation, otherwise they would not have brought over a conforming clergyman.

The authority already quoted was of the opinion that Mr. Blackstone had a better faculty for tilling the ground "than in the things pertaining to the house of God." There is also a repetition of Johnson's slur at the "Canonicall Coate," it being added, "For any one to retain only the outward badge of his function, that could never pretend to any faculty therein or exercise thereof, is, though no honor to himself, yet a dishonor and disparagement to the order he would thereby challenge acquaintance with." This leads to the question, Why was Blackstone alone in the wilderness without the exercise of his profession? There was certainly no fault in his moral character that the unfriendly Hubbard could seize upon. Mather, in his "Magnalia," shows why he stood alone, for, after endorsing his character by placing him among those "godly Episcopalians" who adorned the Christian profession in New England, he says: "This man, indeed, was of a particular humor, and he would never join any of our Churches, giving this reason, 'I came from England because I did not like the *lord-bishops*, but I can't join with you, because I would be under the *lord-brethren*'" (III. c. 11). Blackstone was

in advance of his age. Within and without the Church he saw intolerance, and, feeling his inability to contend, he sought a home in the New World, whither he did not expect intolerance to follow. He was willing to be sequestered, if thereby he could maintain his consistency and independence. He also possessed a taste for the contemplative life, being in sympathy with those men and women lauded by Chrysostom, because out of their seclusion they lavished upon the world gifts more than regal. Nevertheless, he remained a Churchman. His Churchmanship was a matter of common report in Mather's day. With no reason whatsoever can the nonconformist deny his churchly character. He stood, as regards the high-handed tyranny of the lord-bishops, where every reasonable Churchman stands to-day. To avoid it he crossed the ocean and sought refuge among the cloisters of the New England forests, expecting to be as free from intrusion as within the groves of Emanuel. But, as it often happened with the ancient anchorite, the place of his seclusion became the seat of a great city. Like the Arab, he was crowded out by the guest he brought in.

Mather, though entertaining a fair estimate of the man, did not believe in his title to eminent domain, and observes that, "happening to sleep first in a hovel upon a point of land there [Boston], laid claim to all the

ground whereupon there now stands the metropolis of the whole English America." Nevertheless, Blackstone's claim was maintained until the inhabitants had been taxed six shillings apiece to buy his rights, though he still reserved six acres of ground for his own use. It has been doubted, however, whether Blackstone claimed the whole peninsula.

Blackstone remained at Boston about ten years. In 1641, when Lechford, a Churchman and the author of "Plain Dealing," was at Boston, he felt the inconvenience of his principles; and while there he wrote: "One Master *Blakeston*, a Minister, went from Boston, having lived there nine or ten years, because he would not join the Church," adding, "he lives neere Master [Roger] Williams, but is far from his opinions," as he well might be, since Williams held that it was "not lawful to heare any of the Ministers of the Parish Assemblies in England," otherwise, that it was sin. It was no doubt true that Blackstone left because he would not "join the Church." Without actually driving him out, they made it uncomfortable for him to stay.

Blackstone, like many another good man, appears to have been fond of cultivating fruits and flowers, and a writer in the Providence Gazette, supposed to be Stephen Hopkins, the Signer, says that he was in Boston "so long

as to have raised apple-trees and planted an orchard"; but "John Josselyn, Gent.," in his "Account of Two Voyages" (Printed for *Giles Widdows*, at the *Green Dragon*, in St. *Paul's* Church-yard, 1674), says that he had brought to him from Governor's Island, Boston Harbor, in 1638, "half a score of very fair Pippins," there being "not one Apple-tree nor Pear planted yet in no part of the Countrey but upon that island" (p. 29). This Josselyn, however, did not know a wasp's-nest, and went "to pluck it" for a "pine Apple," being so badly stung that they "hardly knew me but by my garments." Yet this same Josselyn professed to know "pippins." Let those Bostonians who are now vindicating to the Church principles of Blackstone see to it that they dispose of Josselyn's implied aspersion respecting the good man's apples.

The founder of Boston, whose two hundred and fiftieth anniversary has just been celebrated, acted fully upon the Kantian dogma, that education consists in the development of one's idiosyncracies; and Blackstone was clearly the father of his people. Yet his departure from the renowned bailiwick which owes him so much was equally satisfactory to the people and himself. Blackstone found the peninsula a wilderness, but left it a rising city. From the tax levied he received £30; but our excellent friend, though a man of peace, did not go before he had a case in court,

which, at Newton, April 7th, 1635, decreed that "Nahanton," his bronzed adversary, should "give two skins of beaver to Mr. Blackestone for damages done his swine by setting traps," etc. (Mass. Rec., I. 43).

Of his funds, tradition says that he invested £12 in cattle. Then, all his preparations being made, while the forests were still fragrant with the perfume of the trailing arbutus, our "godly Episcopalian," vested in that despised "canonicall coate," gathered up his loved books, and, in the company of his gentle-eyed, four-footed friends, southward took his solitary way.

What happened to him further will be told in another paper.

II.

WILLIAM BLACKSTONE:

The First Churchman in Rhode Island, and the Original Settler of the State.

We left our ancient worthy, the founder of Boston, travelling southward in the company of his four-footed companions, whom, after a varied experience, he doubtless regarded as his best friends. He now feels the old longing which originally helped to carry him over the sea:

> "O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
> Some boundless contiguity of shade,
> Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
> Of unsuccessful or successful war,
> Might never reach me more."

At this time he found no difficulty in discovering what met his wants, as New England lay before him a vast, unexplored forest. Following the beaten Indian paths forming a network in the woods, Blackstone reached the territory of the State of Rhode Island, then visited occasionally by Dutch and English traders, but without a permanent white inhabitant.

Selecting lands in the present town of Cumberland, known as the "Attleborough Gore," he built a cottage. His house stood near the site of the bridge that now unites the village of Lonsdale. The Indian name of the place was Wawepoonseag, said to signify "the place where birds are snared," being also mentioned in 1661 as the place where "one Blackstone now sojourneth." His cottage stood at the foot of a hill which had three natural terraces, upon the second of which he dug his well; while the summit of the hill formed a place of retirement and study. His retreat was known as "Study Hill." In 1836 three apple-trees bearing fruit were standing on the south end of Blackstone's meadow, being then considered as having sprung from sprouts of those which he planted.

Of the progress of events at Study Hill it is impossible to speak. Blackstone, however, appears to have had his man Friday, whose surname was Abbott, who attended to his interests, and is duly immortalized by the name affixed to a locality now called "Abbott's Run." Yet in 1659 a radical change was made in the arrangements at Study Hill, for at that time our excellent recluse, though about threescore years old, saw that, after all, the daughters of Boston were fair, and took unto himself a helpmate in the person of Mistress Sarah Stevenson of that city, whom he there married July 4th. No less a magnate than

Endicott, Governor of Massachusetts, performed the ceremony, which took place five years before the time assigned by Drake as that when first "the Church service was performed in Boston without molestation," and seventeen years before the first Episcopal organization was attempted. Blackstone probably chose the services of the distinguished head of the Commonwealth in preference to those of "the Church" he would not "join." A recently discovered broadside shows that at this period he was accustomed to make occasional visits to Boston, riding on a bull, and the object of his pilgrimages may therefore be surmised. It cannot, however, be affirmed positively that the bride in going to Rhode Island travelled in the style of the lovely Europa.

It is evident that after his marriage Blackstone maintained his studious habits, and that, upon the top of his hill, he found opportunities for quiet contemplation which the little voice soon heard in his cottage did not always afford. It is likewise evident that he did not aim seriously at the accumulation of this world's goods. Forty years of labor at Study Hill increased his personal estate only by that number of pounds. His wife's son, John Stevenson, is described as kind and dutiful; while his own tastes were simple, and rendered him so independent that his mental tranquillity was not disturbed by the lean larder.

According to the records of Rehoboth, Mrs. Blackstone died in the middle of 1673; while the venerable man himself passed from earth May 26th, 1675, being more than fourscore years old. Baylies wrote: "In his death this pilgrim of Boston was singularly happy, as it happened a few days before the commencement of that direful war . . . which gave his house and his books to the flames, and rendered his fair and cultivated domain a scene of destruction. His house appears to have been destroyed with the seven houses mentioned by Hubbard in his 'Indian Wars.' Blackstone himself never had any trouble with the savages." Plymouth records contain an inventory of his effects, which gives the contents of his library:

	£	s.	d.
3 Bibles, 10s.—6 English books in folio, £2	2	10	
3 Latin books in folio, 15s.—3 Latin books in largo quarto, £2	2	15	
15 Small quarto, £1 17s. 6d.—14 small quarto, 14s	2	11	6
30 Large octavo, £4—25 small octavo, £1 5s	5	5	
22 Duodecimo	1	13	
53 Small duodecimo, of little value		13	
10 Paper books		5	
	15	12	6

His personal estate was only £40, which shows a handsome proportion for his books. Those "paper books" probably contained important passages in New England History. His family eventually disappeared from Rhode Island, and it was taken for granted that it

became extinct. His "daughter" was never anything more than a myth, while it is not yet certain that any grandson was "killed at Louisburg." His son John, however, became dissipated, and, in 1718, was legally warned out of the town of Attleborough; having previously, in 1692, deeded his patrimony to David Whipple, signing the deed as "John Blaxton." Tradition runs that Blackstone detected the tendencies of his son, and observed sadly that Solomon was mistaken when he said that a man could not know whether his inheritance would descend to a wise man or a fool. Yet recent investigations have proved that the son was wiser than the father supposed, and that after sowing his wild oats he reformed and became a respectable member of society. The name of Blackstone is still preserved by his lineal descendants in Connecticut, who, from the settlement of John at Branford, have grown in public estimation and have done honor to the name, showing that good blood will tell.

We must, of course, inquire here in relation to his ecclesiastical status at this period. Fortunately we are not left altogether in the dark, for Stephen Hopkins, whose grandfather was one of the original settlers of Providence, recorded in The Gazette printed there in 1765 that "Mr. Blackstone used frequently to come to Providence to preach the Gospel." It would also appear that this took place

"when he was old." Blackstone could not have officiated for Roger Williams' flock, as in their eyes episcopacy was a sore evil. Lechford, it will be remembered, says that Blackstone, though "neere Master Williams," was "far from his opinions." In 1649 Cromwell's "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England" was flooding the country with nonconformists, while in 1680 the Bishop of London reported only four clergy of the Establishment in America. The Church Propagation Society was not established until 1701. In 1640 Gibson was engaged in establishing St. John's, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Blackstone was essentially alone, and probably without any connection with Churchmen at a distance.

The historian of Providence could find no trace of "Episcopalianism" there prior to 1722, and though Lockyer was missionary in Newport in 1698, and Honyman evidently held services at Providence in 1704, McSparran, writing in 1753, claims that he was "the first Episcopal minister that ever preached at Providence." At the time he wrote he could not have read the testimony of Hopkins as it was printed in 1765, but the author of "The Annals of Providence" might have taken the narrative of The Gazette into the account when writing the history of "St. John's church," or at least have allowed the name of Blackstone to appear. The same fault is to be found with

the bulky volume of Rhode Island ecclesiastical history, prepared in accordance with a vote of convention, 1840, Dr. Francis Vinton being chairman; but though one searches the five hundred and thirty-three pages in vain to discover some reference to William Blackstone, there is nevertheless a very neat notice of the Narragansett pacing horse.

Blackstone was unfitted to battle with the world, and occupied an isolated position; yet it is probable that from near the time of Roger Williams' advent at Providence there were always Churchmen there, where worship was free, and that the frequent preaching tours made to Providence had the interest of the English Church for their object. There is no evidence whatsoever that Blackstone was a nonconformist or a friend of Roger Williams, while he was always recognized as an "Episcopalian"; the neglect of the man on the part of Churchmen being simply the result of unacquaintance. It is also probable that he performed the services of the Church at "Study Hill," in the vicinity of which, at the time of his death, there were one hundred and sixty inhabitants. Hopkins describes him as an "exemplary Christian."

Heath says that in Rhode Island, as in Massachusetts, he was the first to plant an orchard and raise apples; and since, in Blackstone's visits to Providence, "to encourage his young hearers, he gave them the first apples they ever

saw," and since, moreover, the said apples were "yellow sweetings," the "richest and most delicious of the whole kind," it is quite certain that the venerable missionary was popular with the young. Possibly, too, they were edified by his style of travelling, for Hopkins says that "when he was old and unable to travel on foot, he used to ride on a bull trained and tutored to that use." Coming thus, with his saddle-bags full of "sweetings," and prepared by large knowledge and experience to add apples of gold in pictures of silver, he must have been welcome indeed. The sight might not have pleased the imperious Laud, yet there was something classic in the spectacle, while it would have appealed to the instincts of the historian of the "Narragansett pacer," and, no doubt, secured an appreciative paragraph. We may imagine the children attending the patriarch, as they flocked around Goldsmith's parson—plucking his gown, or at least that "canonicall coate," to catch the good man's smile. Indeed, it is Blackstone's unmistakable love of children, as well as his devotion to fruits, flowers, and the trees of the Lord, which give our best impressions of this gentle and benignant disciple, who, cast in the mould of St. John, was ready to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child.

The ashes of Blackstone repose to-day, with those of his wife, at the foot of the slope of "Study Hill," where, in 1836, two rude stones

marked the grave. They marked the grave of a Churchman to whose memory no monument has yet been built, as well as the grave of the founder of Boston, and one might say the founder of Rhode Island, since about one year in advance of Roger Williams, and Coddington the founder of Providence, Blackstone laid the corner-stone of Christian civilization on the Attleborough Gore.

Blackstone was no ordinary man. The glimpses that we have of his character prove that he possessed qualifications which, under other circumstances, might have made him one of the foremost men of New England. His motto was "Toleration"; the thought being held in a lofty sense that never dawned upon the vision of Roger Williams. He appears every way superior to the times, and stands like some tall rock in the sea whose summit is bathed in untroubled light, while tumultuous waves beat below. At a later period he would have been the friend and colaborer of Berkeley, and together they might have pursued the paths of contemplative philosophy, and labored to lay foundations for education and the Church.

At Study Hill may still be seen a venerable tree that a well-known though eccentric clergyman named "the Catholic Oak," dedicating it to "Universal Toleration," several times holding divine service under its branches, employing the venerable forms loved by Black-

stone so well. No appropriate monument, however, has yet been set up. Rhode Island, nevertheless, will yet honor the founder of the first Christian home within her border, while Boston will also pay with interest the great debt which, according to her historian, she owes to that "memorable man."

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